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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 001205

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SUBJECT: MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL DESCRIBED BY
NEW NSC SECRETARY

REF: 06 KUALA LUMPUR 2198 - NSD CHIEF DETAILS
SECURITY DUTIES

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark for reasons 1.4 (b
and d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Malaysia's National Security Council Secretary Muhammad Hatta outlined the NSC structure during a July 23 lunch with DCM and polchief. We include bio notes on Hatta. End Summary.

NSC Structure

¶2. (C) During a July 23 lunch with DCM and polchief, Malaysia's National Security Council Secretary Muhammad Hatta bin Abdul Aziz commented on the NSC's structure and role. The NSC proper is a sub-set of the Cabinet, Hatta explained. The Prime Minister chairs the NSC. Its members include the Deputy Prime Minister and all ministers with a security-related portfolio, as well as the Information Minister. The chief of the armed forces and the national police chief are also members. Typically, the full NSC meets formally two or three times each year, depending on the issues facing the country.

¶3. (C) NSC Secretary: The position of Secretary reports directly to the Prime Minister, and the person serves at the discretion of the PM with no fixed term. The NSC Secretary is equivalent in rank to a Secretary General in a ministry, Hatta said. The Secretary attends cabinet-level NSC meetings. Hatta assumed the position of NSC Secretary in March 2007, replacing Ahmad Fuad bin Abdul Aziz, who took Hatta's former job as Deputy Secretary General in the Internal Security Ministry.

¶4. (C) NSC office function: The NSC office constitutes the Council's professional staff. The office and its Secretary provide advice and recommendations to the Prime Minister on issues of national security. The Secretary can recommend the scheduling of NSC meetings and agenda items. Ministries and agencies proposing security-related activities to the Prime Minister and Cabinet do not necessarily need to pass these proposals through the NSC office. Agencies normally consult the NSC office on such issues, however, and a written NSC position normally must accompany security-related recommendations when these are submitted to the Cabinet.

¶5. (C) Hatta explained that he had changed the name of his office from the National Security Division to be the National Security Council to better reflect its core function of serving as staff for the cabinet-level NSC. Hatta intended to refocus his office to get back to the fundamental task of

national security, but he did not elaborate further on this approach. (Note: The GOM's website does not reflect this name change. This on-line information continues to list 13 subdivisions within the NSC office, covering a wide variety of areas including maritime security, disaster response, and cyber-security. Hatta did not explain whether he sought to shed existing functions, but his comments seemed to imply as much. End Note.)

¶6. (C) National Intelligence Division: The NSC office interacts with the National Intelligence Division (NID) within the Prime Minister's Department. The NID supports the work of the National Intelligence Council, which like the NSC is chaired by the Prime Minister. NID Under Secretary Hasnan Zahedi bin Ahmad Zakaria, who attended our July 23 lunch, chairs the regular working-level meetings of the NID.

Bio Notes

¶7. (C) Muhammad Hatta started his government career in the Research Division of the Prime Minister's Department, which is the public name for the Malaysian External Intelligence Agency (MEIO). His postings suggest that he continued to work for MEIO at other points in his career, including in a director's role, 2002-2005. He has a graduate degree from the U.S. and he is at ease interacting with Americans. In his previous assignment at the Internal Security Ministry, he made himself relatively accessible to senior Embassy officers unlike many other Malaysian officials at that level. Hatta enjoys playing golf on the weekends.

¶8. (U) The following is a lightly edited version of the biography provided by Hatta's office:

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Muhammad Hatta bin Abdul Aziz, 53, is the Secretary to the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Department, a position he assumed on March 1, 2007. Prior to his current appointment, he was the Deputy Secretary General (Security) at the Ministry of Internal Security.

A career officer with Malaysia's Administrative and Diplomatic service, Hatta started his civil service career in 1976 at the Research Division in the Prime Minister's Department. In 1979, he left for the East Borneo state of Sabah where he served as a member of the State's Security Committee. He returned to the Research Division in the Prime Minister's Department in 1980 before being posted as First Secretary at the Malaysian Embassy in Kuwait in 1981. On his

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return to Malaysia in 1984, he joined the Administrative Division at the Prime Minister's Department and served until 1988 when he was posted as First Secretary at the Malaysian Embassy in Burma. His other overseas assignments included Counselor, Malaysian Embassy Brussels (1990)94) and Minister Counselor, Malaysian Embassy Jakarta (1998)2002).

He returned to the Prime Minister's Department in 2002 as director in the Research Department before being assigned to the Ministry of Internal Security in 2005, first as Under Secretary at the Security and Public Order Division and later

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as Deputy Secretary General (Security).

Dato' Hatta was born on September 9, 1953 in Pekan, Pahang. He has a Bachelors degree in Social Sciences from Malaysia Science University, Penang, and a Masters degree in International Relations from the University of Denver.

End biography.

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